



## **\* Tips For \*** **Nursing Mothers**

### **Nursing the Older Baby**



#### **Starting Solids, Nursing Strikes and Weaning**

##### **Starting Solids**

Many mothers wonder when is the best time to start their baby on solid food. You may have already heard many different things about starting solids. The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests waiting to give solid food until your baby is 4 to 6 months old. When your baby reaches this age, begin looking for these signs:

1. Baby can sit up with support.
2. Baby can turn head away to signal fullness.
3. Baby no longer pushes food out of his mouth. At this point, he can keep food in his mouth and swallow.
4. Baby acts interested in the food on your plate, possibly watching intently as you eat or grabbing for the food.

If your baby is showing signs that he is ready to try solid food, you might pick something like rice cereal to start with. Rice cereal can be mixed with breastmilk or water to a runny thickness.

Seat your baby on your lap or in a highchair. A bib can be helpful! With a small spoon, feed a tiny bit of cereal to your baby. Even babies who have lost their tongue thrust will often spit the first mouthful or two back out. Keep trying gently one or two times to see if the baby will accept food into his mouth. Babies' first meals are quite small, usually several teaspoons--don't make up a big bowl of cereal and expect your baby to eat it all! Also, don't save leftover food for the next meal--it can have bacteria from the baby's mouth and make baby sick.

A good approach is to offer one new food a week so you have time to observe reactions. Try the first food for a week, one or two meals a day, and observe your baby to see how he reacts. Fussiness, splotches on the skin, diaper rashes, diarrhea and constipation can all be signs that the baby is not reacting well to the food. If you have any problems, hold off on that food for several more weeks and then try again. If there are no problems, you can offer another food.

**Careful! Some foods should be avoided in the first year. Cow's milk, eggs, nuts and chocolate can cause allergies and be hard to digest. Honey and corn syrup carry botulism spores.**

### **Nursing strikes**

Sometimes babies go through periods when they refuse to nurse. This generally occurs between three and nine months. Common causes are ear and respiratory infections, mother's sudden (loud!) response to a nip while nursing, and teething or other soreness in the mouth. Many mothers think that a nursing strike means the baby is weaning, but you can often get the baby back to nursing.

#### **Some tips during a nursing strike:**

- Nurse in a quiet, darkened place.
- Offer the breast when the baby is sleepy.
- Try nursing in the bathtub after a peaceful, relaxing bath together.
- Be very relaxed when offering the breast--try not to get stressed out by the baby's refusal.
- Try a new nursing position.

Nursing strikes usually last 2 to 4 days. Express your milk throughout the day while the baby is off the breast and feed your breastmilk by cup or small spoon.

### **Weaning**

There is no best time to wean. Research shows that the longer a child nurses, the more he will benefit. Former United States Surgeon General Antonia Novello once said "Lucky is the child who is breastfed for two

full years."

Some people believe in child-led weaning, which means they nurse until the child decides it's time to stop. Others believe in mother-led weaning, which means they nurse until the mother decides it's time to stop. Either is fine, as long as the mother is comfortable with it. No matter which you choose, try to approach weaning your baby slowly over the course of time. Bit by bit, begin offering bottles or cups of water or formula or even juice from a cup, to replace one feeding at a time. It's good to just replace one feeding every week or two if you can. Remember that one of the best parts of nursing for babies is the cuddling and close time with mom--build lots of time for play and snuggling into your daily schedule as you go through the weaning process.

If you must wean immediately, be sure to plan lots of special contact time with your baby and to express small amounts of milk from your breasts as necessary to relieve fullness and discomfort. You can feed the expressed milk to your baby.

If you have questions about breastfeeding, contact your local:  
WIC Breastfeeding Counselor:

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La Leche League Leader:

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Lactation Consultant:

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